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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [PBTS](#) [PHUM](#) [OREP](#) [IN](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: KASHMIRI LEADERS SHARE PERSPECTIVES WITH CODEL
BURTON

Classified By: DCM Robert Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (SBU) Kashmiri political leaders and human rights advocates described in differing viewpoints the problems facing Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and emphasized the need for redoubled peace efforts between India and Pakistan during a November 28 meeting with CODEL Burton and embassy officers.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq,
Chairman, All Party Hurriyat Conference

¶2. (C) The Mirwaiz remarked that a political solution to the J&K problem will not be found through the bilateral dialogue between the India and Pakistan and that the residents of the Valley must be included in the process. He noted the Hurriyat's position that the future entity of Kashmir must comprise the land which was historically J&K, not the one reflected by current borders. Mirwaiz stated that the current process is too slow and questioned the seriousness of both India and Pakistan, theorizing that the two governments were "just biding time" and not engaging in a genuine dialogue. The opening of the bus route across the line of control (LoC) was an important confidence building measure (CBM), observed Mirwaiz, but he expressed disappointment that no other CBMs have since been implemented.

¶3. (C) Acknowledging that human rights abuses by security forces in the Valley have decreased over the last three years, Mirwaiz asserted that the GOI should decrease troop levels in order to reduce tensions. Commenting that "with only 3,000 to 5,000 militants in the region, the GOI does not need hundreds of thousands of troops to maintain control," Mirwaiz asserted that the GOI should make the necessary changes on the ground to facilitate a peaceful solution. Mirwaiz suggested that a military solution is not attainable, and the GOI and GOP must change their historical stances in order to find a political resolution to the problem.

Omar Abdullah,
President, National Conference and Member of Parliament

¶4. (C) Abdullah, who represents Srinagar in the Lok Sabha, acknowledged that the National Conference and the Hurriyat differ on how to solve the J&K issue. He remarked that the Hurriyat seeks a solution reflecting pre-1947 borders, while the National Conference wants a resolution in line with the "existing special relationship J&K has with India" and in accordance with the Indian Constitution. However, he agreed with Mirwaiz that military force would not succeed and that India and Pakistan must move away from their stated positions. According to Abdullah, Islamabad has gone farther than Delhi in recent years in changing their stance, and it is now time for the Indian Prime Minister to start thinking "outside the box." He proffered that each time there is a new proposal, the MEA is the first to "shoot it down," demonstrating that the GOI is quite content with the status quo. He also discounted the claims that the GOI has a road map for J&K, commenting that, as the leader of the party dedicated to finding a solution within the Indian constitution, he should be shown such a plan were it to exist.

¶5. (C) Abdullah commented that improvements often listed by J&K watchers, such as holding sporting and cultural events, have not really benefited the people in the Valley. The recent earthquake has forced the hand of the Indian and Pakistani governments, Abdullah observed, but he will withhold judgment until concrete results are achieved. He concluded that "a solution will not be found because India and Pakistan want a solution, it will be because the rest of the world will demand it."

Madhu Kishwar,
Center for the Study of Developing Society

¶6. (C) Kishwar, a well-known human rights activist, noted that the "Kashmir problem" affects many more people than just Kashmiris, and that the region is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Indicating that many of the groups, such as the Pahari, Bakkarwals, Gujjars, Buddhists and Pandits, have different opinions on the future status of J&K, she asserted that a solution to the conflict in the Valley must include

their sentiments. A problem that also needs to be overcome is the lack of credibility of local politicians, Kishwar stated. She noted that many politicians change their position depending on their audience, and the electorate does not trust them to tell the truth. She concluded that in order to strengthen the peace process, it is important not to discount the many small improvements that have taken place. Highlighting human rights improvements since 2004, such as increased voter turnout and a decrease in military abuses, she suggested that the parties involved analyze these small successes and find a way to translate them to the larger picture.

Dr. Ajay Chrungoo,
Chairman, Pannun Kashmir

¶7. (C) Dr. Chrungoo, a Kashmiri Pandit (Hindu), argued that when the other participants talk of "Kashmiris," they do not include Pandits in this group and asserted that the first expression of separatist violence was the ethnic cleansing of Pandits from the Valley in 1989. He warned that if these atrocities were not addressed and the Pandits' concerns heard, there would continue to be problems in the region. Chrungoo reiterated Delhi-based analyst Radha Kumar's call to include all of the ethnic and religious groups in the conflict resolution process. He warned that the radical Muslim element of the separatist movement is by far the most dangerous, and it is now targeting moderate Muslims. Discounting claims that the 2004 election was an important step, he commented that an election held under the threat of violence, with over 200 people killed, cannot be considered free and fair. Chrungoo concluded that the politics of the Kashmir Valley have been exclusionary (of Hindus, Shias and Sikhs), and if this trend continues it will validate extremism and result in another "Afghanistan."

Wajahat Habibullah,
Chief Information Commissioner of India

¶8. (C) Mr. Habibullah, Divisional Commissioner (Kashmir) during the early 1990s, highlighted that the meeting of this diverse group in Delhi to discuss openly the issue was significant in itself as a sign of India's and J&K's democracy. He noted that such discussions have also occurred in Kashmir, including a public event in Srinagar between Omar Abdullah and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Yasin Malik. Habibullah remarked that there are many positive developments occurring in the Valley. "The fact that there is a working government is notable considering, until recently, there was an open insurgency, which caused the collapse of the administration and the exodus of the Pandits," he asserted. Habibullah argued for free and full democracy in order to solve the Valley's woes, noting that with only 20 percent participation in the Valley during the last election, it had yet to occur fully.

Dr. Radha Kumar,
Delhi Policy Group

¶9. (C) Kumar signaled that the recent earthquake could create an "enormous opportunity" for the adoption of more CBMs between India and Pakistan. She noted that relief efforts could develop greater ties between governments, civil society and the Valley residents, resulting in a more genuine discussion of the problem. She noted that there are ongoing talks regarding the devolution of power, which she does not see on the "other side of the border." She warned that radical terrorist groups have carried out extensive post-disaster work, giving a "shot in the arm" to the militants, and that we need to double our efforts to move the democratization process forward.

Representative Dan Burton

¶10. (C) Thanking the participants for the informative discussion, Rep. Burton noted that, as a long-time follower of the Kashmir issue, he intended to raise their points in upcoming meetings with PM Singh and President Musharaff.

¶11. (U) This cable has been cleared by Congressman Dan Burton.
MULFORD